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UNCLAS HARARE 000264

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, AF/PDPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT WITNESS IMPLICATES U.S.
GOVERNMENT IN ALLEGED ASSASSINATION PLOT

REF: Harare 259, Harare 230

- ¶1. The February 6 edition of the government-owned "Herald" newspaper reports that Ari Ben-Menashe, the government's star witness in the treason trial of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai and two other opposition leaders, claimed in court that he believed the U.S. Government knew of the alleged assassination plot against Robert Mugabe and that he believed that a participant in one of his meetings with Tsvangirai was a CIA official. The "Herald" plays these claims to the hilt, running the page-one story under the banner headline "Key Witness Names CIA." Copies of the article have been faxed to AF/S and AF/PDPA.
- ¶2. According to Mr. Ben Menashe, participants in the alleged conspiracy to rid Zimbabwe of Robert Mugabe now include former President Clinton, the "Jewish community in America" and the CIA, among a long and generalized list of other groups and individuals. Mr. Ben-Menashe offers Defense attorney George Bizos fertile ground for cross-examination.

SULLIVAN